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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SB 473, otherwise known as the Justice for Survivors Act.

This bill seeks to eliminate the statute of limitations on certain crimes. Under current law, perpetrators of some violent crimes can escape punishment if they are able to remain unidentified for a period of six years from the commission of the crime. These crimes include first degree attempted homicide, second degree attempted homicide, first degree sexual assault of an adult and attempted first degree sexual assault of an adult or child. Current exceptions to the statute of limitations are for first or second degree intentional homicide and first degree sexual assault of a minor.

The statute of limitations has its origins in ancient Roman law. The basic premise behind them is to prevent prosecution in older cases where physical evidence had deteriorated, witness memories faded, and generally the passage of time has had a negative effect on the integrity of the evidence.

Times have changed. Advances in evidence collection and preservation have rendered the statute of limitations outdated. DNA doesn't have a faulty memory, fingerprints can be kept in a computer database forever and be available worldwide, and other types of evidence can be preserved indefinitely. Who would have thought 30 years ago that we'd be able to test for DNA and match it to a perpetrator? Who would have thought years ago that we would be able to have a computer search through millions of fingerprints in minutes and provide a match? Who can imagine the advances we will see in the coming years?

We routinely free the wrongly convicted based upon new forensic evidence. Why would we not utilize the same forensic evidence to obtain some modicum of justice for survivors of violent crimes regardless of the date on the calendar?

After these heinous crimes victims are left with the emotional and physical scars for a lifetime, and our system of justice allows these assailants peace of mind if they elude the police for a mere 6 years. I believe any rational citizen would see it like I do. If the victims have to live with the scars of the crime for a lifetime, then their attackers should never be free from the fear of prosecution. Justice for these monstrous crimes should know no time limits.

I'm asking you today to support survivors of these violent crimes by supporting SB 473.